

and other materials prepared for the public. The Division undertakes activities to encourage business and industry to maintain high standards of honesty, fair business practices, and public responsibility in the production, promotion, and sales of consumer goods and services (Code Commercial Law Article, secs. 13-101 through 13-501).

HEALTH EDUCATION & ADVOCACY UNIT

Vikram Khanna, *Director*

576-6550

Within the Division of Consumer Protection, the Health Education and Advocacy Unit was created in 1986 (Chapters 296 and 565, Acts of 1986). The Unit implements an educational and advocacy program enabling health-care consumers to make more informed choices in the health marketplace and participate in decisions concerning their health care.

The Unit helps health-care consumers understand their health-care bills and third party coverage, identify improper billing or coverage determinations, and report such problems to appropriate agencies, insurers, or providers. The Unit may refer concerns raised by health-care consumers to professional, licensing or disciplinary bodies. The Unit also may recommend to government officers and agencies measures to promote the interests of health-care consumers in the health marketplace.

HEALTH CLUB REGISTRATION UNIT

Steven Sakomota-Wengel, *Administrator*

576-6550

The Health Club Registration Unit was established within the Division of Consumer Protection in 1986. The Unit is responsible for the registration of Maryland health clubs and for ensuring that they are properly bonded (Code Commercial Law Article, secs. 14-12B-01 through 14-12B-08).

ARBITRATION UNIT

Gilbert S. Birnbach, *Director*

576-6550

The Arbitration Unit mediates disputes between consumers and businesses (Code Commercial Law Article, sec. 13-404). Both parties must agree to submit the dispute to arbitration. Neither party is charged for this service.

COMPLAINT HANDLING UNIT

Rebecca G. Bowman, *Director*

576-6550

Consumer Hotlines—Baltimore: 528-8662

Hagerstown: 791-4780

Salisbury: 543-6609

The Complaint Handling Unit receives and conciliates individual consumer complaints (Code Commercial Law Article, secs. 13-401, 13-402). The Unit's three telephone "hotlines" provide consumers with prepurchase advice, business complaint histories, and instructions on how to file a complaint.

INVESTIGATIVE UNIT

Eston Scott, *Director*

576-6570

The Investigative Unit investigates all actions of unfair or deceptive trade practices.

CONSUMER COUNCIL

Mark Silbergeld, *Chairperson*, 1994

Appointed by Governor with Senate advice & consent: Cheryl A. Hysted, 1992; Nancy T. Perry, 1992; Paul A. Riecks, 1992; Edythe M. Rickard, 1994; A. Kimbrough Sherman, 1994; Edna D. Butcher, 1996; Hardev Singh Palta, 1996; Frank A. Porter, 1996.

Ex officio: William Leibovici, *Chief, Division of Consumer Protection*

Staff: Steven Sakamoto-Wengel

576-6550

Created in 1974 as part of the Division of Consumer Protection, the Consumer Council advises the Division on general goals, undertakes studies and reports, and fosters cooperation among federal, State and local agencies, and private groups (Chapter 609, Acts of 1974).

The Council consists of the Chief of the Division of Consumer Protection and nine members appointed by the Governor with Senate consent. Three members represent consumer groups or interests, three represent business groups or interests, and three represent the public sector. Members serve without compensation for six-year terms (Code Commercial Law Article, sec. 13-202).

CRIMINAL APPEALS DIVISION

Gary E. Bair, *Chief*

Mary Ellen Barbera, *Deputy Chief*

200 St. Paul Place
Baltimore, MD 21202

576-6410

The Criminal Appeals Division represents the State in suits involving the criminal justice system. Advocating the State's position in written briefs and at oral argument, the Division handles all appeals in criminal cases in the U.S. Supreme Court, the Maryland Court of Appeals, and the Maryland Court of Special Appeals. The Division represents the State as well in federal court on collateral review of State criminal convictions. The Division also advises State's Attorneys and other law enforcement personnel on legal matters.